(b) if so, whether abolition of the jprcsent reservation system in the sector of small scale industries has been suggested in the report;

(c) the main recommendations of the Committee's report;

Id) whether the Government have since considered the recommendations *of* the report; and

(e) if so. decision taken by Government in this regard and if no decision ha? ru-.-n taken, by when it will be taken ?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) to (c) In addition to the recommendation for abolition of reservation of products for exclusive manufacture in Ihe SSI Sector, major recommendations of the Abid Hussain Committee relate to raising the investment limit for SSI Sector, mechanism for promotion of small scale industries, focus on clusters, restructuring financial support for SSI Sector, integrated support services, support for technology development in small scale enterprises, infrastructure development in clusters and institutional and legal innovations and revitalising the District Industry Centres. Recommendations made by the Committee arc being examined in consultations with relevant Ministries/Departments etc. After the receipt of the report, Government has already decided to raise the investment limit for plant & machinery in a SSI unit from Rs. 6(>75 lakhs to Rs. 3 crores and that for a tiny unit from Rs. 5 lakhs to Rs. 25 lakhs, as recommended by the Committee. Earmarking a proper share of credit to the tiny sector within the priority sector lending is under active consideration of the Government for safeguarding their interest.

Families living on tnc earnings of Child Labour

*24. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether even half a century after the Independence and development efforts made through eight five year plans at least 110 million families in India live on the earnings of child labour;

(b) if so, how the number of families dependent on child labour have grown from plan to plan since the First Five Year Plan;

(e) the number of these children employed in hazardous industries, mines and other hazardous jobs; and

(f) the efforts made to do away with dependance on child labour, especially to eliminate child labour from hazardous industries and jobs as per Article 24 of the Constitution?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): (a) md (b) No, Sir. Authentic data on working children is generated through the ddcen nial census. Information on the number of families which are dependent on the earnings of child labour is not generated in the census. The number of working -children on the basis of the last three censuses was as under:

1971	10.75 million
1981	13.64 million
199.1	11.28 million

The number of working children acting to the latest census is 11.28 niBion. Therefore the quest.on of as many as 110 million families be.ng dependent on the earnings of child labour does not arise.

(c) The census data do not indicate the number of children employed in hazardous occupations separately. It is estimated that about 2 million children are working in hazardous occupations and processes.

(d) Government have taken a series of steps for the elimination of child labour working in hazardous occupations as provided for under Artical 24 of the constitution. Under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986, the employment of children is prohibited in 7 occupations and 18 processes contained in parts A and B of the schedule to the Act. Employers employing children in the prohibited occupations and processes are liable to be prosecuted under the Act. There are also provisions in various other labour laws safeguarding the interest of working children. Apart from legal measures, government have taken steps for withdrawal and rehabilitation of child labour working in hazardous occupations. 76 child labour projects have been set up for the rehabilitation of around 1.5 lakh children working in hazardous occupations. These child labour projects are located in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A major activity undertaken under the child labour project is the establishment of special schools to provide non-formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition etc. to children withdrawn from employment. As per the available information, around 1.05 lakh children are already enrolled in the special schools. The parents of child labour in project areas are expected to be covered on priority under the existing poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes with a view to raising their economic status so that they are able to send their children to schools instead of work. Besides opening of child labour projects, funds have been sanctioned for carrying out survey on child labour in 123 districts and for awareness generation against the evils of child labour in 133 districts.

Slashing production by Indian Ferro-alloy Producers

*27. DR JAGANNATH MISHRA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Indian ferro-alloy metal producer have slashed their production by 1,00,000 tonnes per year on account of unfavourable ruling international rates and the ability of South African producers to operate at higher volumes with lower margin; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the rcaciton of Government in regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) Government have received representations from Indian Ferro Alloy Producers Association (IFAPA) drawing their attention to problems faced by Ferro Alloy Producers including inter-alia higher cost of production on account of increases in power tariff, unfavourable internaitonal market etc.

Production of Ferro Alloys during the last 3 years and as per available information for the current year is annexed in the enclosed statement *(See below).* This does not show a definite declining trend.

However, a meeting has been convened in this regard with IFAPA during March 1997.